

# Hearings on Religious Persecution in Sudan: Bishop Macram Max Gassis Prepared Testimony

February 15, 2000

(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

## "SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS"

KAUDA, NUBA MTS., Central Sudan.

On

Tuesday, Feb. 8, forces loyal to the Khartoum regime launched an air attack on a Catholic school in the Nuba Mountains, part of the Roman Catholic diocese of El Obeid. According to local reports, the Antonov aircraft dropped four shrapnel-laden bombs that landed near the school while outdoor lessons were going on, killing 14 children, and wounding 17, some critically. Ten children enrolled at the school are still missing. A teacher was also killed. Most of the victims were first-grade students who were in the middle of an English lesson when the attack occurred. Nuba eyewitnesses also reported that eight bombs fell on nearby villages during the attack.

According

to a Feb. 11 Reuters report, Sudanese government officials defended the attack, saying that schools are a legitimate target in the country's long-running civil war. "The bombs landed where they were supposed to land," Dirdiery Ahmed, an official in the Sudanese embassy in Nairobi, told Reuters.

The following statement was issued

Feb. 11 by Roman Catholic Bishop Macram Max: Gassis of El Obeid, whose jurisdiction includes the Nuba Mountains, and who founded Kauda's Holy Cross School, where the attack occurred. Bishop Gassis is currently in the United States raising funds for the people of the Nuba Mountains and other war-affected populations in Sudan.

With

deep grief and dismay I have learned from my diocesan staff that the Islamic fundamentalist regime of Khartoum has once again unleashed its deadly bombers on the innocent civilian population of the Nuba Mountains and their social institutions, maintained with such heroic

effort in the midst of war. And, as so often before, the forces of Khartoum have targeted the most vulnerable, and most precious of our resources: our children.

On Feb. 7-8, two Russian-built Antonov bombers targeted the heavily populated areas around Kauda. The Catholic Church has set up there the only well-established school in the area, with more than 300 students. Fourteen of these children were killed outright in the raid, and the number of wounded is yet to be fully determined. The information available to me at this time suggests that we will lose yet more young lives as a result of this deliberate, and barbarous assault.

Truly, this is a "slaughter of the innocents," an unbridled attempt to destroy the Nuba's hope, and, indeed, their future by destroying their children.

I have time and time again told the world that the National Islamic Front regime in Khartoum has been, and is conducting a campaign of genocide aimed at exterminating the Christian, African, and non-Arab populations of Sudan in order to establish a uniform Arab-Islamic fundamentalist state in the heart of Africa. This terrible, heart-breaking incident is yet another piece of evidence, if more were still needed, that the war in Sudan is a religious and ethnic war launched by Khartoum and aimed at the destruction of my people.

We cannot bring back the fourteen children martyred under the trees in Kauda. There are many Rachels there today, weeping for their children. What we can do is call upon the international community to refuse to stand idly by while the African and Christian peoples of Sudan are exterminated. Stand with us. Do not let the deaths of these little ones be in vain. Help us bring an end to this hidden holocaust.

If you would like more information on the above statement or would like to interview Bishop Gassis, please contact:

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